

# eHouseCall

2007

A Monthly Electronic Newsletter from HealthLink

## Doctor's Bag



by Robert Sorrenti, MD  
Chief Medical Officer

### THE JURY IS STILL OUT

While organic food advocates claim that organically produced products are safer, tastier and more nutritious, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) makes no such claim. It states simply, "Organic food differs from conventionally produced food in the way it is grown, handled, and processed."

Here's something we can all agree on: Organic or not, when it comes to flavor, safety and nutrition, if you want to get the most from your food, eat it while it's fresh. Even an organically grown apple will lose much of its nutritional value if it sits in the refrigerator too long.

Prepared properly, fruits, vegetables, grains and lean meats are better for us than processed foods. They typically contain higher levels of vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants and are more effective in keeping us healthy, trim and energetic.

Choosing fresh food over organic is a major step toward a healthier lifestyle. The choice regarding organic foods is yours. If you believe that organically produced products are safer, tastier and more nutritious, and are willing to spend the money on the higher price of organic products – go organic and feel good about supporting this growing industry.

## HLInfo YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO HEALTH CARE AWARENESS

JANUARY

### ORGANIC FOOD: IS IT REALLY BETTER?

#### Why Go Organic?

According to the USDA, "Organic food is produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations."

If you're thinking of going organic but not sure where to start, here are some tips from WebMD:

If you want to reduce pesticides in your food, buy organic versions of foods that conventionally carry high levels of pesticide residue: spinach, green peas, green beans, green onions (scallions), summer and winter squash, apples, peaches, pears, strawberries, blackberries and raspberries.

If you're most interested in promoting the organic farming industry, buy organic foods that require large expanses of cropland and pasture: wheat, corn, other grains, dairy foods and beef.

If you are a proponent of more natural conditions for farm animals and fewer antibiotics and hormones, buy products from organically raised livestock and poultry: milk, cheese, yogurt, eggs and meat.

In short, you can pick and choose organic foods based on your own needs and goals.

According to WebMD, "If you can manage the higher price, and you like the idea of fewer pesticides and a more environmentally friendly production system, organic food may be for you. But don't skimp on healthy conventional foods just because you think you need to save your pennies for the few organic items that you can afford."



## DidUKnow?

### WHAT QUALIFIES AS ORGANIC?

Organic foods are grown and processed according to standards set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

- Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones.
- Organic food is produced without conventional pesticides, fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge, bioengineering or ionizing radiation.
- Before a product can be labeled "organic," a government-approved certifier inspects the farm where it is grown to make sure the farmer has adhered to USDA standards.
- Companies that handle or process organic food before it gets to your local supermarket or restaurant must be certified, too.
- "Free-range, hormone-free, and natural" are not the same as organic.
- The USDA Organic seal signifies that a product meets USDA regulations.



### Newsletter Information Sources:

WebMD "Is Organic Food Better for You?" ([www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)); U.S. Department of Agriculture Customer Brochure "The National Organic Program" April 2002; USDA National Organic Program (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/NOP/indexIE.htm>)

HealthLink®, Inc., is an Illinois corporation. HealthLink, Inc. is an organizer of independently contracted provider networks, which it makes available by contract to a variety of payors of health benefits, including insurers, third party administrators or employers. HealthLink has no control or right of control over the professional, medical judgment of contracted providers, and is not liable for any acts or failures to act, by contracted providers. HealthLink, Inc. is not an insurance company and has no liability for benefits under benefit plans offered or administered by payors. HealthLink® is a registered trademark of HealthLink, Inc. The information provided herein is educational only, and it is not intended to provide medical care or medical advice, which only your doctor can provide.